

HERITAGE COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

July 8, 2010

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the City Council Chambers at 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, July 8, 2010, at 4:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates:

Chairperson Philip Donovan called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Chairperson Donovan, Vice-Chairperson Frederick Richards, and members Steve Shurtleff, Carol Durgy Brooks, James McConaha, and Marilyn Fraser. City Planner Douglas Woodward and Administrative Specialist Donna Muir were also present. Absent from the meeting were Committee Members Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, Robert V. Johnson, II, and Dr. Bryant Tolles.

Chairperson Donovan elevated the alternate members to full member status for the meeting.

2. Minutes of the June 3, 2010 meeting:

The Commission considered the minutes of the June 3, 2010, Heritage Commission meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Shurtleff to accept the minutes as presented and seconded by Mr. McConaha. Chairperson Donovan asked if there was any discussion regarding the minutes. The motion accepting the minutes of the June 3, 2010, meeting passed unanimously.

3. New Business:

a. Consideration of a NHDHR notification and opportunity to comment on the National Register Nomination of the Blossom Hill and Calvary Cemeteries:

Mr. McConaha made a motion that the Heritage Commission recommend to the City Council to adopt a resolution concurring with the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources to nominate the Blossom Hill and Calvary Cemeteries to the National Register. Vice-Chair Richardson seconded the motion. Chairperson Donovan asked if there was any discussion regarding the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Consideration of a NHDHR finding of "no Historic Properties affected" by a NH Fish and Game application on the public boat access on Hot Hole Pond:

Chairperson Donovan stated that this request was for informational purposes only, as no historic properties are affected.

- c. *Discussion relative to the Commission's status as a "local land use board" when reviewing applications in the Historic District and applications for Demolition Delay, and the requirement for members to meet a juror standard or to otherwise disqualify themselves from participation in any decision making:*

Chairperson Donovan stated that he wanted to table this item once again, as he knows that Mr. Johnson has comments regarding this issue, and Mr. Johnson is not in attendance.

4. Old Business:

- a: *Status of Certified Local Government Grant for the historic schools survey:*

Mr. Woodward stated that the contract was signed by the consultant, Elizabeth Durfee Hengen and City Manager Thomas Aspell. The grants were approved by Governor and Council at the end of May. Mr. Woodward said that he knows that Ms. Hengen is actively working on the surveys. All work for this grant must be completed by September 30, 2010.

- b. *Discussion of the Concord School District's decisions on the Elementary School consolidation plan*

Vice-Chair Richards advised the Commission that three public hearings were held, which were required under the Demolition Delay review process. The first hearing held was for the Conant School, the second hearing was for the Kimball School and former Morrill School, and the third hearing was for the seven private homes in the Kimball/Morrill area. He stated that there were between 20 – 30 people who attended each of the hearings, with the largest turnout for the Kimball School and former Morrill School. While the numbers appeared to be evenly split "for" or "against" for the school buildings, more people were in favor of not demolishing the seven houses. Vice-Chair Richards said the School Board was not persuaded to change their minds about the demolition from the public hearings.

After the hearings, members of the Demolition Delay Committee discussed the possibility of changing the Demolition Delay ordinance to "put some teeth" into the ordinance.

[Ms. Fraser arrived at 4:50 p.m.]

Chairperson Donovan said that he had a conversation with Matt Cashman, the facilities director for the Concord School District, last Wednesday, regarding salvage from the buildings. He said that the School Board is willing to provide the keys to the seven residential buildings to the Heritage Commission in order to salvage anything in the buildings and dispose of the items however the Heritage Commission sees fit. Mr. Cashman stated that the Vermont Salvage Company offered the School Board \$2,000 for

salvage from the buildings. He also stated that an auctioneer said that he would be able to auction off salvage from the buildings, but that the School Board would need to pay the auctioneer, as he didn't believe he would be able to recoup his costs from the auction. Ms. Brooks asked whether the Heritage Commission was equipped to hold assets. Mr. McConaha stated that the Heritage Commission could not hold the titles to the seven houses. Chairperson Donovan thought it would be possible for the Heritage Commission to hold a public sale. Mr. Woodward asked what time frame the School Board was looking at to demolish the buildings. Chairperson Donovan said that the buildings would be demolished in October or November. Ms. Fraser said she didn't like the sound of the offer. Vice-Chair Richards stated that the Heritage Commission is interested in saving the buildings and not bits and pieces of the structures. Chairperson Donovan felt that the School Board missed the mark with their offer for salvage.

Mr. McConaha felt that at the end of the public hearings, the School Board could still be persuaded that Kimball School was not the best site for a new school, and that the Heritage Commission needs to continue its efforts to find alternatives to the demolition of the Kimball School building. He suggested that the Heritage Commission sit down with the School Board and School District personnel to discuss alternative sites. Mr. McConaha said that the Heritage Commission should also pass onto the Planning Board the results of the Heritage Commission's and the Demolition Delay Committee's work and encourage the Planning Board to really examine traffic and other issues. He also suggested that whatever the Heritage Commission submits to the Planning Board should also be copied to the City Council.

Mr. McConaha felt that the Heritage Commission could emphasize that if the School Board asks the City Council to do the bonding for the school consolidation projects it would be less expensive for the School Board, and it would also provide an opportunity for the City Council to look at the affects of the project on the citizens of Concord, the taxes, etc.

Mr. McConaha also suggested that the School Board be reminded about Betty Hoadley's suggestion to complete the three school projects in phases, with the Broken Ground project commencing now, the Conant project commencing in five years, and the Kimball project commencing in ten years. This would provide the community a chance to really look at the Kimball project to see if it is a good idea to have the new school at this site and to offer time to review other sites that may be more appropriate. Mr. McConaha stated that the School Board has never taken on a project this size and he is concerned because they have deleted the Clerk of the Works for the project from the project budget.

Vice-Chair Richards said that there is a difference in opinion among members of the Heritage Commission regarding the school project, as there are some members who like the idea of new schools.

Chairperson Donovan said, in an effort to bring the discussion together, that while Mr. McConaha makes some very good points regarding the project, the Heritage Commission must separate the mission of the Heritage Commission from the overall impact of the school project. The politics, taxes, etc. are not in the purview of the Heritage

Commission. He feels that it would be appropriate for the Heritage Commission to send a letter to the Planning Board, with a copy to the City Council, outlining the Heritage Commission's desire to save the historic buildings. Chairperson Donovan also stated that it would be appropriate to request a meeting with the School District and the School Board, but that it would be necessary to provide them with something in addition to what the Heritage Commission has also provided them with, such as alternative workable sites. Ms. Fraser said that she didn't believe that searching out sites for the school projects was a responsibility of the Heritage Commission. Chairperson Donovan agreed with Ms. Fraser, but said that part of the Demolition Delay Committee's role would be to provide "alternatives to demolition." He also stated that the School Board has looked for alternative workable sites unsuccessfully. Chairperson Donovan stated that it is important that the Heritage Commission balance its mission with the reality of the situation. Ms. Fraser said that she thinks that the public is very aware that the Heritage Commission is against the demolition. Vice-Chair Richards said he agrees with Chairperson Donovan regarding being on record with the Planning Board and City Council.

[Mr. Woodward left the meeting at 5:25 p.m.]

Chairperson Donovan reminded the Commission that the School Board is elected and that the community voted the School Board members into office. He stated that perhaps the Heritage Commission can be more effective now by educating the Planning Board and City Council.

Ms. Brooks reminded the Commission that she is and has been abstaining from all the voting regarding the school projects, because of her husband's former role, but thinks it is important to remember that the Heritage Commission's mission is one of advisory to the City Council.

Mr. McConaha proposed that the School Board and others put together a group of people whose mission would be to find a suitable site, located between Beaver Meadow School and Conant, for the new Kimball School. He also stated that although the idea of having the school project as a phased development is not within the Heritage Commission's purview, it is important that the School Board be made to look into this again; that the Heritage Commission should stress that there is no alternative except alternative sites. Mr. McConaha believes that the community would benefit from an alternative site and the historic Kimball School building would be saved.

Chairperson Donovan said that he had a discussion with Matt Cashman, who said that the School District had already looked at alternative sites and are not going to do it again. Chairperson Donovan asked what leverage Mr. McConaha thought the Heritage Commission had to ask the School Board to revisit alternative sites. Vice-Chair Richards said that the proposed meeting with the School Board and School District personnel was a good idea and should be to talk about the Heritage Commission's mission to save the historic buildings, but not to discuss other issues. He agrees with the Chair that all of Mr. McConaha's points are valid, but they do not come under the Heritage Commission's mission.

Ms. Fraser stated that when the original studies were undertaken by the School Board regarding alternative sites, there were different members of the School Board and now there are all new School Board members except one.

Mr. Shurtleff stated that he felt the School Board's offer to let the Heritage Commission go into and salvage from the seven house while the School Board has a matter pending before the Heritage Commission was unethical. He stated that he is on both the Planning Board and the City Council and knows that traffic consultants will be at the August City Council meeting.

Ms. Brooks asked whether full reports of the Heritage Commission and the Demolition Delay Committee were prepared and provided to applicants. Chairperson Donovan stated that Craig Walker from the City's Code Administration Division, receives the reports from the Demolition Delay Committee as part of the demolition review process.

Chairperson Donovan said that the Heritage Commission has two action items on the table regarding the school consolidation project:

1. Prepare a letter to the Planning Board, with a copy to the City Council, capturing the Heritage Commission's sense of the community's responses at the public hearings.
2. Hold a meeting with or write a letter to the School Board and School District personnel outlining the Heritage Commission's recommendations and alternatives.

Mr. Shurtleff said that because the School Board now owns seven properties, they will need to think about what they would do with these properties if they chose an alternative site for the new Kimball School. He felt that this would be a hindrance to deciding on alternative sites and that perhaps the Heritage Commission could offer the School District some ideas for these seven properties.

Chairperson Donovan said that he understands what Mr. Shurtleff has stated, but feels that just because one bad decision was made, it doesn't mean that additional bad decision need to be made. He cited an example with the School Board's property on Old Turnpike Road that was to be used as the transportation building.

Mr. McConaha stated that the Heritage Commission needed to be prepared with a Heritage Commission proposal offering the School Board a better idea. Vice-Chair Richards asked what the better idea would be. Mr. McConaha stated that the better idea was that the only alternative is for the School Board to find an alternative site to save the historic properties on the Kimball/Morrill block.

Chairperson Donovan asked the Commission whether they felt it would be better to request a meeting or to share the Commission's ideas in a letter. It was decided that these two items would be referred back to the Demolition Delay Committee for further action.

c. Proposed demolition of 92A Washington Street (Franklin Pierce Law Center):

Vice-Chair Richards stated that Franklin Pierce Law Center has applied to demolish 92A Washington Street, which is a small red house located to the right of the new center building. He stated that next Thursday, some of the Demolition Delay Committee would be going on a tour of the site. A public hearing will be scheduled for this building in the near future.

5. Other Business:

a. Gibson's Book Store Event:

Mr. McConaha stated that on July 28, 2010, Charlie Sheridan would be at Gibson's Book Store to discuss his book "*A Window in Time*." This is a book about the failure of the Merrimack Farmer's Exchange.

b. Locally Designated Neighborhood Districts:

Chairperson Donovan stated that he was looking at the Heritage Commission's section of the Master Plan to review the Commission's goals, in light of the discussions regarding changes to the Demolition Delay ordinance and because he feels that the Heritage Commission ends up dealing with issues at the eleventh hour. One of the items in the Master Plan is the locally designated neighborhood heritage districts. He believes that having neighborhoods designated would provide the Heritage Commission with more credibility and management abilities. He stated that the Heritage Commission would begin discussions on this next month. Ms. Brooks said that when the Master Plan was put together, one of the sets of maps shows the neighborhood designations, so that the framework for the Heritage Commission is already there. Chairperson Donovan stated that Jill Seifried, a former City of Concord Planner, had started doing some work with neighborhoods and that the Heritage Commission should begin by looking at that information.

There being no further business or discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Fraser and seconded by Mr. Shurtleff to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Donna Muir
Administrative Specialist